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AUTHOR Blai, Boris, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

This study, which concerns the impact of Harcum Junior College on student learning, considers the average improvement of a sample of students in a series of skills-achievement measures. It is concluded that students who complete transfer curricula receive effective preparation for continued study in a four year institution. (DLG)

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HARCUM JUNIOR COLLEGE
BRYN MAWR, PENNA. 19010

Office of Research
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# EVALUATION OF HARCUM'S EFFECTS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

1. In theory, there are two principal elements which are associated with student achievement. They are: (1) differences in initial aptitude among students (Nature), and (2) college characteristics contributing to student learning (Nurture). Certainly any study of the college's impact on students must take into account differences in student aptitude before valid consideration can be given to measuring the possible differential effects of the college's contributions to student achievement.

2. To attempt to control for the student's ability prior to college entrance, the ability which has contributed to the student's academic growth while in college, this study considers the average improvement among a sample of Harcum students in a series of skills-achievement measures. Through a "before" and "after" testing situation for a sample of incoming freshmen who are retested upon completion of their 2-year program, the net effect is to hold constant the factor of differences in student aptitude by combining the differences in improvements among the low, average, and high aptitude students. The remaining differences, if any, between the group's performance initially upon entrance to Harcum, and their performance immediately before graduation two years hence, may then be associated with the college's effects, (the so-called "environmental press"), upon student achievement. (1)

3. Two measures of academic achievement and aptitude were employed in 1968 to measure educational progress associated with college characteristics. This study revealed an average improvement among a group of 43 Harcum seniors in transfer curricula, of some 19% in the six achievement areas measured by the STEP (Sequential Tests of Educational Progress): Reading, Writing, Listening, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The second measure employed was the SCAT (School and College Ability Test). The average improvement here (in the

(1) Blai, Boris, Jr. "Measuring Educational Progress Through "Before and "After" Testing. PSYCHOLOGY, Vol.5, No.2, May 1968. pp 39-41.

TM 000 997

"Total" score) was 12% for the areas of Verbal and Quantitative abilities. In accordance with the rationale of the SCAT, the "Total" score provides the best single indicator of academic capacity level. Therefore, these improvement-differences, (STEP = 19%; SCAT = 12%), evidence a greater probability for success in their future academic endeavors.

4. A follow-up among the 43 Harcum graduates in this sample resulted in replies from 35, or 80% of the group. These replies are summarized below for the four statements contained in the questionnaire which they completed.

(1) "After Harcum graduation I transferred to a 4-year college."

95% Yes 5% No

This 95% acceptance rate for Harcum "transfer-curricula" 1967 graduates compares most favorable with the average 43% rate for Harcum graduates during the period 1962-1970.

(2) "I earned my bachelor's degree" 79% Yes 11% No 10% Still Attending

This 79% baccalaureate graduation rate for these 1967 graduates also compares most favorable with the earned baccalaureate degree rate of 22% for the period 1962-1970.

(3) "I am working for my master's degree." 52% Yes

This 52% rate working for master's degrees also compares very favorably with the 11% rate reported for Harcum graduates of 1962 through 1969.

(4) "I plan to study for my doctorate." 14% Yes

In this projected area, the 14% indicated, again compares favorably with the .9% rate previously reported to Harcum by her alumnae.

5. A third survey, reflecting the differences in post-Harcum academic achievement of Harcum alumnae, revealed among a sample of 350 Harcum alumnae, that only 23% of Harcum graduates who transferred on to 4-year colleges were dropouts, whereas 73% of students attending Harcum for only one year were 4-year college dropouts. In short.... "the 4-year college dropout rate was more than three times as great for Harcum one-year dropouts as the rate for Harcum graduates." (2)

6. The data developed in these three studies clearly suggests:

(1) When the differences in student aptitude are held constant - the impact of Harcum during 1965-1967 upon its "transfer-oriented" students was to increase their academic levels of performance: (STEP = 19%; SCAT = 12%).

(2) This improved level of performance for 43 Harcum graduates of 1967 is further reflected when comparing their post-Harcum academic success with the average academic achievement of Harcum graduates of 1962-1970.

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(2) Blai, Boris, Jr. "Harcum Graduates vs 1-year Dropouts Excel in 4-year College Transfers". (IRR 70-38), Harcum Jr. College, Bryn Mawr, 1970 (mimeographed)

| | 1967 Grads. | 1962-1970 |
|---|---|---|
| Baccalaureate degrees earned..... | 79% | 22% |
| Working for master's degree..... | 52% | 11% |
| Plan to Work for doctorate ..... | 14% | .9% |

7. From the data developed in these three surveys we therefore conclude that ...."Harcum students who successfully complete transfer curricula are receiving a two-year preparation which effectively prepares them to successfully articulate into four-year collegiate programs." (3)

8. Although Harcum has never been, and probably never will be a big college, it has been, and will continue to be a viable college with developing stature as a collegiate institution of learning.

Boris Blai, Jr. Ed.D.
Director of Research

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(3) Blai: op cit